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Research on Training Methods of Wind Bands in Primary and Secondary Schools in China

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Abstract: Training methods directly affect the performance quality and aesthetic education outcomes of wind bands in primary and secondary schools. Wind bands are divided into three sections according to instrument families: woodwind, brass and percussion, each with distinct training requirements. Based on a review of relevant literature, this paper adopts the methods of literature research and case analysis to systematically summarize the training methods of wind bands in Chinese primary and secondary schools from the aspects of band instrumentation and section composition, ensemble formation and organizational management, basic skill training, section and ensemble training, and teaching materials and repertoire development. It also analyzes the existing problems in teacher resources, basic training and evaluation mechanisms, and puts forward targeted improvement suggestions, so as to provide a reference for the scientific training of wind bands in primary and secondary schools.

Keywords: Primary and Secondary Schools, Wind Band, Section Training, Training Methods.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

With a complete instrumentation and rich timbre, the wind band is an important carrier for ensemble teaching and aesthetic education in primary and secondary schools. In recent years, the number of wind bands in Chinese primary and secondary schools has grown rapidly, yet training methods mostly rely on teachers' personal experience and lack systematic norms, resulting in widely varied training outcomes (Cui Hua, 2019). The training of wind bands is distinctive in that it involves many instrument types and finely divided sections; the woodwind, brass and percussion groups differ notably in playing principles and training requirements, and cannot be trained with a single unified model (Kuang Jin, 2025). Scientific and reasonable training methods are the basic guarantee of ensemble performance quality and one of the most urgent issues in wind band development. Sorting out and summarizing effective training methods is of important practical significance for improving the overall level of wind bands in Chinese primary and secondary schools.

1.2. Research Methods

This paper adopts the literature research method to retrieve and study relevant literature on the formation, organization, management and training methods of wind bands in primary and secondary schools, and adopts the case analysis method to analyze the specific practices of multiple domestic schools in instrumentation, selection, training and management, so as to summarize experience that can be used for reference.

1.3. Innovations

Taking section composition as the entry point, this paper integrates instrumentation, formation, basic training, section and ensemble training, and teaching materials and repertoire into a systematic framework, and sorts out a set of operable and reproducible training methods. Combined with the actual conditions of domestic schools, it proposes improvement suggestions to provide a reference for frontline music teachers in wind band training.

2. Training Methods of Wind Bands in Primary and Secondary Schools

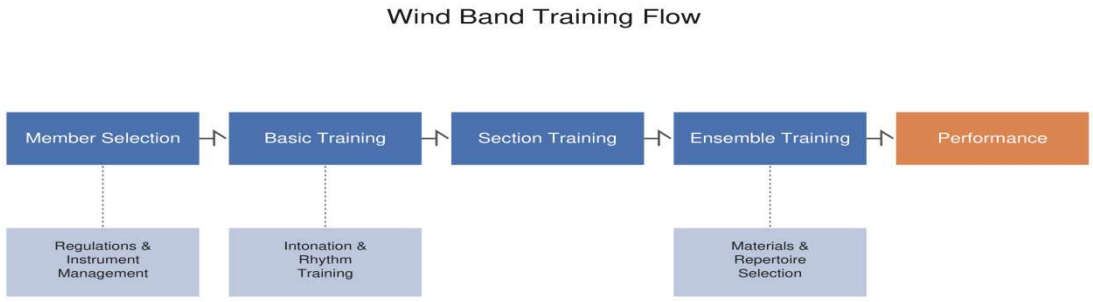


Figure 1. Training process of wind bands in primary and secondary schools

2.1. Band Instrumentation and Section Composition

Wind bands are divided into three section groups according to instrument families: woodwind, brass and percussion. The woodwind group takes the flute, clarinet and oboe as its core instruments. With a soft timbre and weak penetration, it often bears the melody parts and demands delicate playing skills, strict breath control and finger flexibility (Kuang Jin, 2025; Cui Hua, 2019). The brass group takes the trumpet, trombone and tuba as its core instruments. With a grand volume and

bright timbre, it often provides harmonic and rhythmic support. Playing relies on lip vibration, and strict requirements are imposed on breathing and embouchure; the tuba, as the bass foundation of the ensemble, has especially high requirements for intonation and breath support (Cui Hua, 2019). The percussion group mainly uses the snare drum, bass drum and cymbals, and is responsible for the rhythmic framework and dynamic climax, demanding students' sense of rhythm, speed control and dynamic gradation (Kuang Jin, 2025).

In instrumentation, the number of instruments should be arranged according to the principle of volume balance among sections: the volume of one trumpet is roughly equivalent to that of two or three clarinets, and one clarinet to about two flutes; on this basis, the number of players in each group should be reasonably arranged to avoid volume imbalance among sections (Cui Hua, 2019). A common instrumentation for primary and secondary school wind bands includes flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba, snare drum and bass drum, and the specific numbers may be adjusted according to student enrollment and playing level.

2.2. Ensemble Formation and Organizational Management

Ensemble formation is the premise of training. In player selection, voluntary participation should be combined with professional assessment: brass players need neat teeth and relatively thin lips, woodwind players need finger length suitable for key positions, and percussion players should pass rhythm tests; students' musical expression desire and team responsibility should also be examined (Qu Xin, 2019). In teacher allocation, the woodwind group has strong individuality in each part and one professional teacher is advisable for each part; the brass group can be divided into high-pitched and low-pitched groups with teachers assigned respectively; the percussion group can be assigned one teacher, and an initial teaching team needs at least six professional instructors (Hu Yifan et al., 2019).

In organizational management, a two-tier management team of teachers and students should be established: at the teacher level, a full-time band management teacher is responsible for coordinating external teachers and classroom discipline; at the student level, students with a strong sense of responsibility are selected as band leader and section leaders to realize self-management (Hu Yifan et al., 2019). Strict instrument management regulations should also be formulated to ensure the integrity and cleanliness of instruments before and after use, with a designated person in charge of daily storage (Fang Xiaolin, 2019); a complete set of management regulations covering training, attendance, rewards and punishments, and instrument maintenance should be established and observed by both instructors and students (Qu Xin, 2019).

2.3. Basic Skill Training

Basic training is the foundation of the performance quality of a wind band. Breathing training, tone production training, embouchure training and scale training are the core contents of basic training, aiming to enable players to perform in a standardized, accurate, fluent and expressive manner, while strengthening the education of instrument playing principles and music theory knowledge (Fang Xiaolin, 2019). Individual skill training can be divided into three levels: breathing method, blowing method and playing method. The breathing method requires mastering correct thoraco-abdominal breathing and forming a habit; the blowing method requires mastering tone production principles, embouchure, fingering, tonguing and music reading; and the playing method requires correct understanding and expression of music (Qu Xin, 2019). Foreign studies have also shown that breathing exercises, long tones, lip slurs and scales are the basic contents of effective practice, and the mastery of practice strategies affects performance level more than the amount of practice time (Miksza P., 2007; Austin J. R. & Berg M. H., 2006).

In daily training content, scale training, arpeggio training and tone quality exercises should be reasonably arranged: scale training starts with long tones within the playing register and varies rhythms and dynamics to improve finger speed; arpeggio training practices finger flexibility through ascending and descending main triads over several octaves; and tone quality exercises start from the lowest note and move up semitone by semitone for repeated practice, achieving twice the result with half the effort (Fang Xiaolin, 2019). In addition, endurance training is an important part of basic skills and requires sustained long-tone practice to ensure stable breath and sound quality (Hu Changqing, 2021). Intonation and rhythm are basic requirements of ensemble playing; teachers should correct common mistakes in time and adopt differentiated training methods such as unison, octave unison and scale melody ensemble according to register differences (Fang Xiaolin, 2019).

2.4. Section Training and Ensemble Training

Section training is the foundation of ensemble training and should be conducted by groups of woodwind, brass and percussion. The woodwind group focuses on timbre unification and breath continuity, ensuring the smoothness of melodic lines through long-tone and legato practice, while paying attention to avoiding rushing the beat in ensemble (Kuang Jin, 2025). The brass group focuses on the standardization of breathing and embouchure; brass instruments are difficult to sound, and players should lay a solid foundation through lip buzzing, mouthpiece buzzing and physical fitness training before entering instrument playing (Kuang Jin, 2025; Cui Hua, 2019). The percussion group takes snare drum practice as the core, focusing on rhythmic accuracy and dynamic gradation, and then extends to the coordination of bass drum, cymbals and other instruments (Kuang Jin, 2025). Within each group, unison and ensemble playing of the same section should be used to unify tone quality and timbre and cultivate the cooperative ability within the section (Qu Xin, 2019).

Ensemble basic training aims at sound balance and fusion, stable tempo and proper dynamic adjustment, cultivating players' aural ability, cooperative ability, intonation and textural sense, integrating singing into ensemble playing, and building interest in ensemble music (Qu Xin, 2019). Daily ensemble practice should be persistent and gradual: first, breathing should be steady, intonation adjusted, and each section should enter and exit neatly; second, scale and arpeggio practice should be emphasized to be smooth and balanced in dynamics; third, the percussion section should grasp beat preparation and accents (Qu Xin, 2019). In the refinement stage, instructors should, according to the musical requirements and the actual level of the band, solve technical and musical expression problems step by step with priorities, so that the work is performed completely and fluently (Qu Xin,

2019).

2.5. Teaching Materials and Repertoire Development

Teaching materials are the support for standardized training. Foreign countries have developed systematic training material systems for wind bands, such as the American 3D Band Fundamentals and the Japanese Performance and Training of Wind Instruments, which systematically plan daily training methods and training repertoire and have been translated and introduced into China (Hu Yifan et al., 2019). However, these materials are suitable for bands with a certain playing level, and using them directly for beginner bands will increase training difficulty; in practice, the Standard of Excellence Band Method helps beginner bands get through the start-up stage smoothly (Hu Yifan et al., 2019). In repertoire selection, the actual playing level and educational goals of the band should both be considered, and repertoire that can improve students' playing level, aesthetic level and learning interest should be given priority, so that training and performance promote each other (Hu Yifan et al., 2019).

Table 1. Key points of training methods for wind bands in primary and secondary schools

Training stage	Main content	Implementation points
Instrumentation and section composition	Woodwind (flute, clarinet, oboe, etc.); brass (trumpet, trombone, tuba, etc.); percussion (snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, etc.)	Arrange according to section volume balance; consider student enrollment and level
Formation and management	Player selection, teacher allocation, management team, regulations	Voluntary application + professional assessment; teachers for each section; two-tier management
Basic training	Breathing, embouchure, scales, arpeggios, tone quality, endurance	Thoraco-abdominal breathing; start with long tones; semitone tone practice; differentiated training by section
Section and ensemble training	Woodwind/brass/percussion group training, ensemble practice, refinement	Sections first, then ensemble; different difficulties per group; solve technical problems step by step
Teaching materials and repertoire	Material selection, localized repertoire	Standardized method for beginners; repertoire balancing level and educational value

3. Main Problems in Current Training

3.1. Unbalanced Teacher Structure

A wind band involves many sections and instrument types, and its training requires professional teachers mastering the performance of multiple instruments. At present, the music teacher quota in most schools is limited, and it is difficult to allocate professional instructors for all woodwind, brass and percussion sections, so schools generally rely on external teachers. External teachers have scattered teaching hours and high mobility, and it is difficult for them to have an in-depth understanding of students, which affects the continuity and systematicity of training (Hu Yifan et al., 2019). In some schools, even the situation of one teacher for the whole band appears: with limited energy, the teacher can only focus on a few sections, and the training quality of other sections can hardly be guaranteed, directly constraining the overall level of the band.

3.2. Insufficient Systematic Basic Training

Some bands emphasize ensemble over basic training, and the training content is arbitrary, so that scale, arpeggio and long-tone exercises cannot be guaranteed; training progress lacks planning, and students enter ensemble practice before their foundations are solid, causing repeated intonation and rhythm problems and affecting the overall performance effect (Fang Xiaolin, 2019; Hu Changqing, 2021). Meanwhile, basic training often adopts a one-size-fits-all approach without differentiated content for different sections and students of different levels; the woodwind, brass and percussion groups face different training difficulties, yet targeted special training arrangements are lacking.

3.3. Imperfect Training Evaluation and Incentive Mechanism

Most bands lack assessment and evaluation of the training process and outcomes, so there is no distinction between students who practice more or less, better or worse, and their training motivation is hard to sustain. Foreign studies point out that clear practice goals and self-evaluation are key factors in improving practice effectiveness, and practice without goals and feedback tends to be formalistic (Miksza P., 2007; Hallam S. et al., 2012). Domestic bands generally lack evaluation means such as section assessment and stage reports, nor do they have corresponding incentive mechanisms, resulting in the phenomenon of practicing to fill time and making it difficult to guarantee training quality.

4. Suggestions for Improving Training Methods

4.1. Strengthen Teacher Team Building

Schools should gradually allocate professional instructors for each section according to the band instrumentation, attach importance to the cultivation of band management teachers and section leaders, and establish a stable teaching team; external teachers should be managed and trained in a unified way, with their training responsibilities clarified, so as to ensure the continuity of training (Hu Yifan et al., 2019). Regional teaching and research activities and university music education resources can be relied on to organize regular training for wind band teachers and improve their mastery of teaching methods for the woodwind, brass and percussion sections; schools with the conditions may establish a collaborative lesson preparation mechanism for section

teachers to keep the training progress and requirements of all sections consistent.

4.2. Improve the Basic Training System

A standardized training plan should be formulated, incorporating breathing, embouchure, scales, arpeggios, tone quality and endurance into daily training, and proceeding step by step and persistently; intonation and rhythm should be corrected in time during training, and differentiated training should be carried out by section and level to consolidate the foundation of ensemble playing (Fang Xiaolin, 2019; Qu Xin, 2019). Specifically, the woodwind group should focus on long-tone and legato training for timbre unification, the brass group on breathing and embouchure standardization, and the percussion group on rhythm and snare drum basics, so that the basic training of each group is well targeted. At the same time, the conclusions of foreign research on effective practice strategies should be drawn on to help students master practice methods such as goal setting, difficulty decomposition and slow practice, so as to improve practice efficiency (Miksza P., 2007; Austin J. R. & Berg M. H., 2006).

4.3. Establish Training Evaluation and Incentive Mechanisms

An evaluation mechanism in the form of section assessment, stage reports and final performances should be established, incorporating intonation, rhythm, tone quality and ensemble performance into the evaluation content, so that students can clarify their training goals and gaps (Miksza P., 2007; Hallam S. et al., 2012). Incentive means such as section leader competition, selection of outstanding members, and participation in performances and competitions can be adopted to enhance students' training enthusiasm and collective honor; evaluation results should be fed back to students and parents in time, (Oare, S. 2012). forming a virtuous cycle of training-evaluation-improvement and ensuring the continuous improvement of training quality.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

The training of wind bands in primary and secondary schools involves multiple links such as instrumentation, formation, management, training and teaching materials. Taking section composition as the entry point, this paper summarizes the main training methods of Chinese primary and secondary school wind bands from five aspects: band instrumentation and section composition, ensemble formation and organizational management, basic skill training, section and ensemble training, and teaching materials and repertoire development, and puts forward improvement suggestions for the outstanding problems in teacher resources, basic training and evaluation mechanisms.

In the future, the development of wind bands in primary and secondary schools should further strengthen teacher training, improve training norms and evaluation mechanisms, promote refined and scientific training, and continuously improve training quality through regional exchange and long-term follow-up practice, so that wind bands can better give play to their aesthetic education function.

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